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TODAY

IN MISSISSIPPI



Youth Tour 2022

CHASING
STORMS

TEACHER
OF THE YEAR

COMFORT
CASSEROLES

AUGUST 2022

We can all make a difference

August means it's time for both teachers and students to head back to the classroom.

Mississippi teachers are the heroes of our education system.

Our main feature this month is an interview with Mississippi's Teacher of the Year, Skye Morgan.

A U.S. history teacher at Petal High School and a member of Dixie Electric, Morgan is an excellent example of the kind of person that dedicates her life to improving the lives of Mississippi's children.

Although they may not have won any official accolades or had their names mentioned in the press, Mississippi is filled with great teachers like Morgan who work long hours to prepare students for life's challenges ahead.

Our main feature this month also highlights the state's Parent of the Year, Tara Denevan. A mother of two students in the Oxford School District, Denevan reminds us that teachers aren't the only adults in the community responsible for the education of our children.

Ensuring academic success is up to all of us.

I have three children. My wife and I both believe strongly in being part of the educational system as volunteers. Years ago, I helped coach the junior high football team. My wife was very active in parent/teacher organizations.

Research correlates family engagement with student achievement. And it's not just students who reap the benefits of parental and community volunteerism in schools.

Volunteers receive recognition and respect from students and staff as well as the opportunity to develop new skills, new opportunities for networking, and new friendships.

The volunteering opportunities for parents and community are many — mentoring, tutoring, fundraising, coaching, career education, extracurricular and community service activities, and assisting in school offices and classrooms.

There is some role for all of us in the education of our community's students. You can make a difference. You matter as much as our students.

We hope you enjoy the August issue. 



by Michael Callahan

Executive Vice President/CEO
Electric Cooperatives
of Mississippi



Mississippi is...

*Sitting on the river bank with my family that I love,
or listening to the sound of a lone dove.
Hearing the crickets chirp during the night,
or telling stories around the campfire light.*

*Chasing the fireflies and putting them in a jar,
while hundreds fly and light up from affair.
Seeing a doe and her two baby deer crossing the road,
or a truck piled high with pine logs as its heavy load.*

*Watching beautiful sunsets in the western sky,
an amazing background to church steeples rising high.
Listening on Sunday morning as the church bell rings,
waiting for the preaching of God's Word the choir sings.*

*Rivers, creeks, and streams to wade in, camp by, or fish,
lots of good Southern cooking with love in each dish.
Pine trees, corn fields, soybeans, and many a catfish pond,
each a part of my Mississippi of which I am quite fond.*

*by Cheryl McGinnis,
a resident of Tylertown, and a
member of Magnolia Electric*

What's Mississippi to you?

What do you treasure most about life in our state?
Send your brief thoughts to *Today in Mississippi*,
news@ecm.coop or mail to
P.O. Box 3300, Ridgeland, MS 39158

Submit your beautiful digital photo of life in
Mississippi to *Today in Mississippi*, news@ecm.coop



Plant butterfly weed species to provide monarch habitat

Butterfly weed and related plants provide the primary forage for monarch caterpillars.

Most gardens and landscapes are planned for either beauty or utility. We want pretty places to live in and look at, and we like to eat fresh fruit and produce that we have grown.

But there are other reasons to prepare a garden or landscape. One of the most fun and rewarding reasons is to make room for butterflies and other pollinators. Today, I want to talk about how to make your landscape welcoming to monarch butterflies.

The monarch butterfly could be called America's Butterfly. Although it is found outside this continent, the North American monarch is one of the most recognizable and loved of all insects. The annual migration of the North American monarch is one of the most unusual, as it is the only insect known to make a two-way migration, like that of migrating birds.

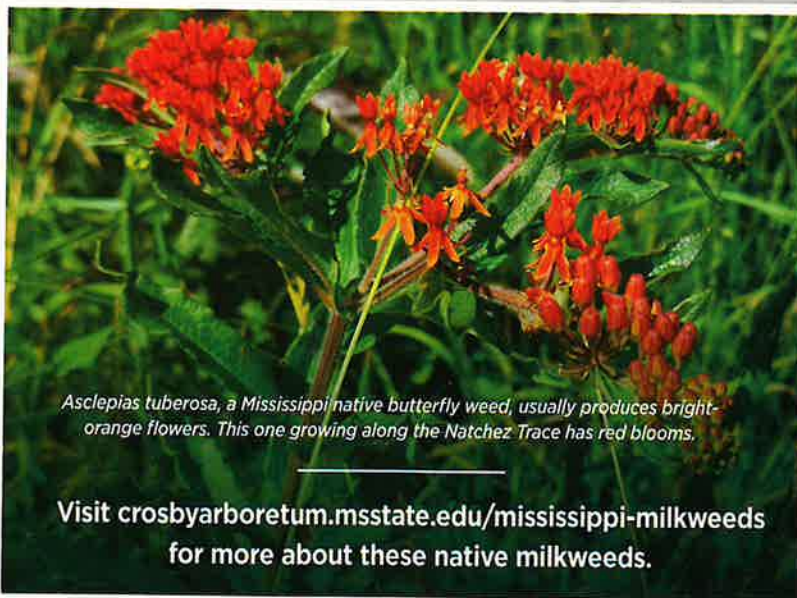
You probably easily recognize the brilliant coloring of the large monarch butterflies. They have two sets of deep-orange wings with black borders and veins, and white spots along the edges. As a caterpillar, it striped in yellow, black, and white bands and reach up to 2 inches long before it becomes a light-green chrysalis with tiny, yellow spots.

As gardeners, we can help them the most at their caterpillar stage when they have voracious appetites.

Butterfly weed, known scientifically as the *Asclepias* species, and related plants provide the primary forage for monarch caterpillars. In garden centers, you are most likely to find *Asclepias tuberosa*, a Mississippi native, and *Asclepias curassavica*, a non-native tropical plant.

Tropical milkweed, which is the common name for *Asclepias curassavica*, has the potential to cause problems because the plant doesn't die back to the ground in the winter.

A protozoan parasite of monarch butterflies known commonly as "OE" can live on the milkweed leaves and be transmitted to caterpillars. In adult monarchs, high levels of OE have been linked to a variety of negative factors, including lower migration success, reduced body mass, and a shortened lifespan.



Asclepias tuberosa, a Mississippi native butterfly weed, usually produces bright-orange flowers. This one growing along the Natchez Trace has red blooms.

Visit crosbyarboretum.msstate.edu/mississippi-milkweeds
for more about these native milkweeds.

If you decide to grow tropical milkweed in your garden, you are advised to cut the tropical milkweeds plants back to the ground to help prevent the spread of this parasite.

The good news is that native milkweeds die back after blooming, killing any parasites living on them. Mississippi has up to 14 different milkweed species that are native. That gives us the ability to make a lot of habitat available to monarch butterflies.

The Mississippi State University Crosby Arboretum in Picayune has been leading the way in

promoting these lesser-known native species. In fact, that's where I learned about seven new-to-me milkweed species I'm growing this summer. 



**by Dr. Gary
Bachman**

Gary Bachman, Ph.D., Extension/Research Professor of Horticulture at the Mississippi State University Coastal Research and Extension Center in Biloxi. He is also host of "Southern Gardening" radio and TV programs. He lives in Ocean Springs and is a Singing River Electric member.

A BOOST TO THE EYES

I shamefully admit to being sluggish about getting a good binocular. I toyed with some small and inexpensive units early on, but these were less than satisfactory. That was long ago. Things have changed now, both in my eyes and in manufacture of the binocular.

A serviceable and solid binocular is an implement that finds a great many uses. Obviously, those uses are primarily employed by outdoors types, but some magnification of vision can often be



A compact – 8X32; this is ideal for carry. A medium binocular that is easily carried – 8X42. The author's biggest unit, yet not with a 50mm objective – 10X42. All have proven satisfactorily.

employed around the house. And with my eyes much older than I am, or so it seems, I always keep at least one binocular close.

While I will not be able to go into an extensive list of details regarding what makes up a good binocular and certainly will avoid telling anyone what to purchase, I will try to highlight some of the finer points of the binocular. These points can be somewhat complex but are worth knowing.

Nomenclature can be puzzling. Designations/descriptions are generally in "Xs" and millimeters. All must be understood. For instance, a binocular will be designated with something like 8X32. That simply means eight power (X) magnification and 32mm diameter of the objective lens, that lens out front. Or 10X50. Same concept. Magnification determines how "big" the object viewed is, and the millimeter marking suggests, as that millimeter increases, enhanced light gathering. There are other factors involved in

that latter, such as quality of and coating applied to the glass, but higher millimeter numbers generally mean a brighter image.

There are three basic levels of binocular: compact, medium, and large. Compacts are generally 8X32 and are small and easy to carry. Medium span a range of designations, but 8X42 seems the standard. Large units are just that — large. They may carry a designation of 10X50 or even up to 20X50. These are often bulky and heavy around the neck if carried on a strap, but they can be purely superb. Fortunately, there are now several carry systems available to mitigate that heft, placing weight on the shoulders rather than the neck. All my trips to Africa found me with 10X42s medium sized.

And what does good glass cost? Sticker shock can enter the picture here. The best of the best, regardless of size, can be expensive — \$1,000 and higher. But that doesn't have to be. With advances in coatings and glass and stiff market competition, satisfactory binoculars can be had around the \$150 mark. More is generally better, but the non-owner of a binocular must start somewhere.

Read about, study materials, and choose wisely before buying. You will then enjoy the boost to those eyes. 🌿



Kinton used a binocular that pushed close to the large size on all his Africa trips. Its designation was 10X42.



by Tony Kinton

Tony Kinton has been an active outdoors writer for 30 years. He lives in Carthage and is a Central Electric member. Visit www.tonykinton.com for more information.



Kinton's top two choices and most often used: (L) Compact, 8X32; Medium, 10X42.

The calm during THE STORM



Stan Dorroh

"Storms can change direction without notice and, especially here in Mississippi, they often move more than 50 mph. They also tend to occur more at night. Another danger is that our terrain often severely limits our view of the storm. Combine all of those factors with the fact that we usually try to position ourselves within one to two miles of the storm/tornado, and it is very easy to find yourself in a very precarious situation," Dorroh said.

The response from the group's Facebook followers has been enthusiastic.

Dorroh said a recent video of a lightning storm in Union County received more than 45,000 views on Facebook.

"I think it gives people peace of mind that they can watch from behind the scenes. People trust they can leave a message on our Facebook page and get a reply almost instantly, depending on how active the weather is. Most of the interaction comes at night when people will send a Facebook message to our page, asking if it is safe to go to sleep, or when they are awakened by a storm and want to ensure they are safe," Dorroh said.

Bishop said his group has a different approach than TV weather teams.

Follow the group on Facebook
@NorthMississippiStormChasers

"We don't tie ourselves down to particular regions like TV stations have to do. We will travel to where the storms are and provide that information to the local National Weather Service office," Bishop said.

The group also spends time answering direct questions from the public via their Facebook page.

The group is affiliated with WTVA in Tupelo and provides weather coverage, photos, videos, and live streams for the station when they are near its coverage area.

"Many people are justifiably scared of severe weather, especially if they have already lived through a traumatic experience," Bishop said.

"They know they can come to our Facebook page any time of day or night for the latest information. Our audience knows that the page will be updated, and that we have spotters/chasers and people watching to keep our community safe." 🌩️



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"I love this computer! It is easy to read and to use! I get photo updates from my children and grandchildren all the time."

— Janet F.

Have you ever said to yourself "I'd love to get a computer, if only I could figure out how to use it." Well, you're not alone. Computers were supposed to make our lives simpler, but they've gotten so complicated that they are not worth the trouble. With all of the "pointing and clicking" and "dragging and dropping" you're lucky if you can figure out where you are. Plus, you are constantly worrying about viruses and freeze-ups. If this sounds familiar, we have great news for you. There is finally a computer that's designed for simplicity and ease of use. It's the WOW Computer, and it was designed with you in mind. This computer is easy-to-use, worry-free and literally puts the world

at your fingertips. From the moment you open the box, you'll realize how different the WOW Computer is. The components are all connected; all you do is plug it into an outlet and your high-speed Internet connection. Then you'll see the screen – it's now 22 inches. This is a completely new touch screen system, without the cluttered look of the normal computer screen. The "buttons" on the screen are easy to see and easy to understand. All you do is touch one of them, from the Web, Email, Calendar to Games— you name it... and a new screen opens up. It's so easy to use you won't have to ask your children or grandchildren for help. Until now, the very people who could benefit most from E-mail and the Internet are the ones that have had the hardest time accessing it. Now, thanks to the WOW Computer, countless older Americans are discovering the wonderful world of the Internet every day. Isn't it time

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There's more than one way to look at vegetation management. The work electric cooperatives and their contractors do to help keep electric lines and other equipment separated from plant overgrowth plays a major role in safety and service reliability.

Maintaining clear rights-of-way (ROW) along power lines is vital to a co-op's ability to provide reliable service. It is also necessary to maintain a proper distance between trees and power lines to ensure public safety.

Co-op members need to understand that maintaining ROW is not an inconvenience, it's a necessity. Controlling vegetation within the ROW floor assures safe access for employees when they are troubleshooting outages and repairing downed power lines. The overall result of ROW maintenance is quicker restoration of outages during storms.

From mowing and brush work at ground level to tree trimming near or above power lines, Mississippi's electric co-ops regularly inspect and manage the landscape in and around their equipment. Effective to prevent outages, minimize the threat of fire damage, and maintain access and serviceability.

Clearing brush and other low-growing vegetation is accomplished by a combination of bush-hogging and herbicide application. Co-ops use off-the-shelf, non-restrictive herbicides because they are effective,

economical, and environmentally friendly. They are not harmful to humans, pets, or livestock. Managing vegetation in this way also allows native grasses and wildflowers to grow, thereby improving the aesthetics and wildlife habitat along the ROW.

“

Communication is indispensable to successful vegetation management programs. Stakeholders need to understand how vegetation management will benefit them, and that includes education on how a vegetation management program minimizes the risk of tree-caused power outages.

According to industry research, about 20% to 30% of all power outages are related to vegetation.

Removal of tall trees and limbs near power lines also reduces risks of injuries caused by accidental contact with energized powered lines.

Mississippi's electric co-ops regularly share information and updates on local vegetation management efforts to keep the public safe and communicate how tree and plant growth trimming increases service reliability.

"Communication is indispensable to successful vegetation management programs," said Randall H. Miller, a vegetation

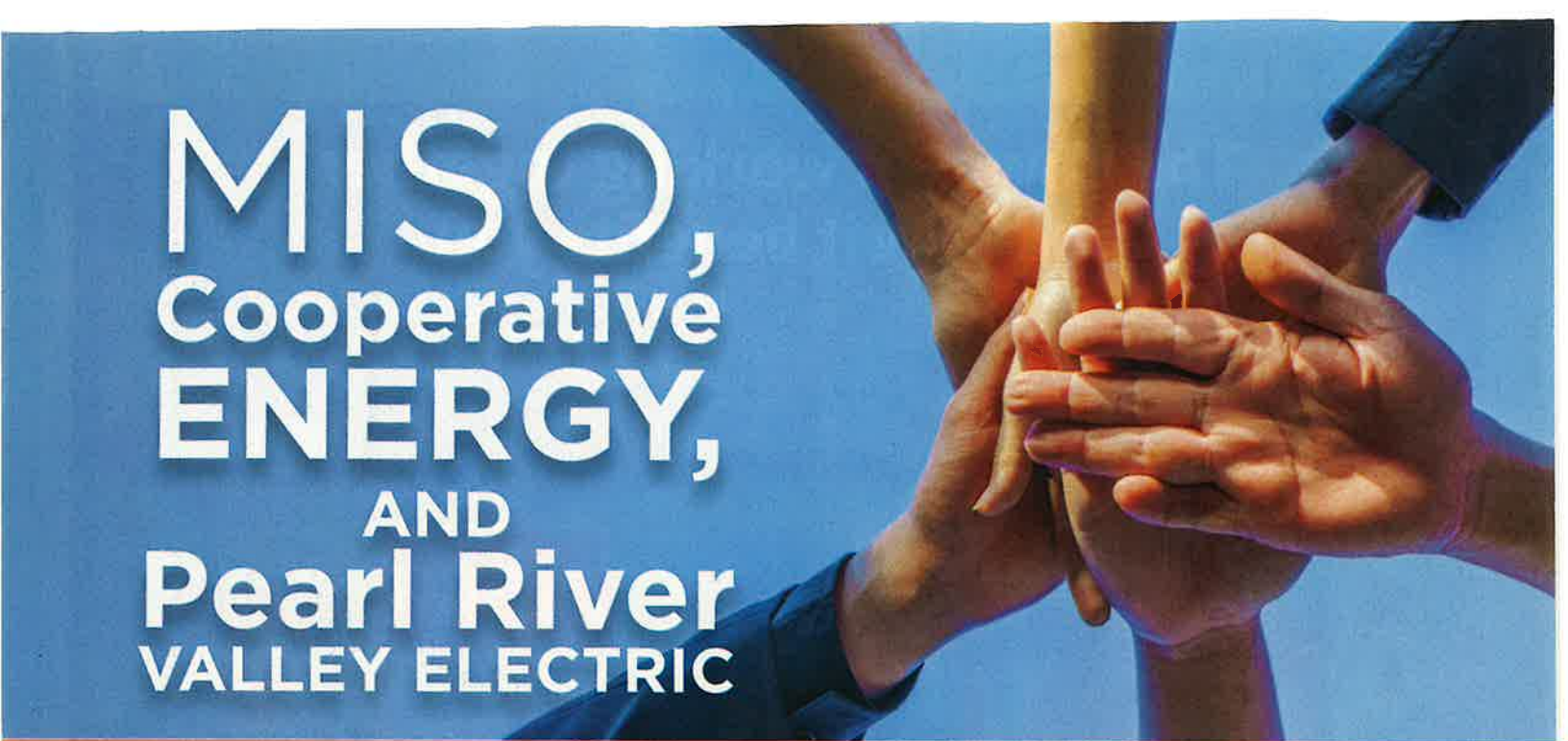
management consultant. "Stakeholders need to understand how vegetation management will benefit them, and that includes education on how a vegetation management program minimizes the risk of tree-caused power outages." 



From mowing and brush work at ground level to tree trimming above power lines, your local electric co-op regularly inspects and manages the landscape near electrical equipment.



A. (From left to right) Pearl River Valley Electric Youth Tour students Abigail Hammons and Connor Gibson at The Albert Einstein Memorial, a bronze sculpture, in Washington, D.C. **B.** Abigail Hammons and Connor Gibson pose for a photo in front of the Iwo Jima Memorial at The U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial. **C.** The students stand in front of the White House during their D.C. trip. **D.** The Pearl River Valley Electric Youth Tour students take a photo at the U.S. Capitol.



MISO, Cooperative ENERGY, AND Pearl River VALLEY ELECTRIC

The **POWER** of working **TOGETHER**

Pearl River Valley Electric, as a local electric distribution cooperative, is a member of Cooperative Energy, a generation and transmission electric cooperative. Cooperative Energy generates electricity at power plants across the state then delivers that electricity along high-voltage transmission lines to Pearl River Valley Electric and 10 other local electric distribution cooperatives. From there, each electric distribution cooperative distributes the electricity to homes, schools, and businesses — the places where people need it.

With 12 cooperatives working together as one mutual source of power, the service provided to nearly 1 million Mississippians across the state is more affordable and reliable than it would be if each system operated alone.

With that same concept in mind, Cooperative Energy is part of MISO, a regional transmission organization. MISO, also known as the Midcontinent Independent System Operator, is a large network that joins Cooperative Energy with other power companies in the U.S. and Canada. Working together, each power company in the network can provide more affordable and reliable electricity than if each power company operated independently.

Cooperative Energy and other MISO members work together to produce electricity for their consumers at the lowest cost possible, and to make sure electricity is always available. When one power company can produce electricity at a lower cost than

others, the other members purchase that electricity at a savings for their consumers. Likewise, if one power company needs help to produce enough electricity to serve their consumers' needs, the other companies sell their excess electricity to them.

MISO acts much like an air traffic controller. MISO does not own the power plants or power lines, but rather helps direct the flow of electricity between the power companies.

Beyond affordability and reliability, MISO membership provides each power company access to a variety of renewable energy resources. The MISO pool of generation resources includes wind, solar, and hydropower in addition to more traditional sources of electricity — natural gas, coal, and nuclear. This allows each member power company to provide renewable energy to their consumers that may otherwise be unavailable to them. (ex: Mississippi lacks sufficient wind power to sustain wind

generation. As a member of MISO, though, Cooperative Energy provides Pearl River Valley Electric and its consumers with wind-generated electricity.)

Overall, the relationships demonstrated between Pearl River Valley Electric, Cooperative Energy, and MISO holds true to the cooperative way of doing business. All three entities demonstrate the power of working together to provide affordable and reliable energy to the consumer-members. That is a top priority at Pearl River Valley Electric and Cooperative Energy.

“
**All three entities demonstrate
the power of working
together to provide affordable
and reliable energy to the
consumer-members.**

**For more information on Cooperative Energy,
visit CooperativeEnergy.com or MyElectricCooperative.com.**

For more information on MISO, visit MISOEnergy.org.

Protect pets

from warm weather risks

by Susan Collins-Smith

When temperatures rise, it's not just humans who need to take precautions.

Heat stress is just as serious and life threatening for pets as it is for humans.

While both dogs and cats can get too hot, dogs are more susceptible to overheating, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke.

"Humans sweat to cool off, but dogs don't," said Carla Huston, Mississippi State University Extension veterinarian and professor with the MSU College of Veterinary Medicine. "Dogs cool themselves by panting and drinking water. They have a very limited ability to sweat through their noses and foot pads. When the outside temperatures are too warm and they don't have access to adequate shelter and clean water, they can overheat easily."

Warm weather can be too much for dogs even when it does not seem that hot to humans.

Use caution with dogs and limit their outdoor time if they do not have appropriate shade and cool, clean water when the heat index is 80 degrees and above, Huston said.

Heat injuries in pets can range in severity from heat stress, which is the least severe, to heat stroke, which can be very severe and lead to death. Early signs of heat stress in dogs include excessive panting, excessive drooling, anxiousness, restlessness, bright-red gums, and unsteadiness. Animals showing signs of heat stress should be kept rested, taken inside, or cooled off, and given plenty of water.



The more serious signs of heat stroke can include pale gums, unsteadiness, tacky or dry snout and mouth, vomiting and diarrhea, nonresponse to the owner or commands, and collapse. If dogs experience any of these symptoms, get emergency veterinary care immediately.

In cats, heat stress can cause restless behavior, panting, drooling, moist or sweaty paw pads, and excessive grooming as they try to cool off. Collapse, seizures, and death can occur if the cat cannot cool down.

Another summertime danger for dogs is blue-green algae.

"Pets should not be allowed to drink from or swim in lakes or ponds that may be contaminated by blue-green algae blooms, which are bacteria called cyanobacteria," Huston said. "These algae can be toxic and result in fatal poisoning."

Contaminated water usually has a foul odor, may appear green with a bluish tint, and could be covered with thick, slimy algae, she said.

Treating pets for external parasites will help keep their skin and haircoats healthy and maintain their ability to protect against temperature extremes and other potential injuries. Medications for fleas, ticks, and heartworms are just the first step in protecting pets from parasites. Depending on where a family lives, it may also be necessary to treat the yard and other areas that pets frequent to successfully control fleas, ticks, and mosquitoes.

"Not allowing pets inside the house is the surest way to avoid having fleas inside the house, but not all pet owners favor this method," said Blake Layton, Extension entomologist. "Whether or not pets are allowed inside, the first step in flea control is to treat pets with an effective and appropriate on-pet treatment." ❁



by Steven Ward

There was a time when all Skye Morgan thought about was designing sets on Broadway.

That changed after a former theater teacher asked Morgan if she would fill in for her as a long-term substitute when the teacher was out on maternity leave.

"I thought she was crazy for asking, as I was a challenging kid. I thought there was no way the principal would even let me. But I did it and loved it! I was sad to give it up when she returned," Morgan said recently.

Today, Morgan, 39, is a U.S. history teacher at Petal High School and is Mississippi's Teacher of the Year.

The annual Mississippi Teacher of the Year program — put on by the Mississippi Department of Education — recognizes exemplary teachers in the state who inspire students, demonstrate leadership both inside and outside the classroom, and serve as active members of the community. Morgan received a \$5,000 stipend and will share her expertise through various presentations and activities.

Morgan, who is a member of Dixie Electric, will represent Mississippi in the National Teacher of the Year competition.

Morgan, who had a grandmother and aunt that were educators, said she had a hard time focusing when she was in high school.

Back then, the last thing she wanted to be was a teacher.

"I wanted to get as far away from high school as possible. I was always interested in production, so I pursued a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree with an emphasis in production-scenic design and lights/sound from The University of Southern Mississippi and had all intentions of pursuing that as my career," Morgan said.

Her stint as a substitute changed her direction.

Although she attempted to work in the theater, the work wasn't as fulfilling as her time in the classroom.

"Weirdly enough, I felt I was being called back to the classroom. So, I pursued an alternate route licensure and Masters of the Arts in Teaching

from USM. Luckily, a principal took a shot on me and here I am," Morgan said.

"I am so grateful for all of my high school teachers who did not give up on me and poured into me regardless of my attitude or behavior. They saw potential in me I did not see in myself. It is because of them that I am what I am today."

Morgan said she is especially indebted to her high school speech and debate coach and theater teacher, Kelly Garner. The two were close in high school.

**“
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Skye Morgan (left) chats with school counselor Emily Calcote in the Petal High School library.



Mississippi Parent of the Year Tara Denevan

Oxford School District mom Tara Denevan was named the state's 2022 Parent of the Year by the Mississippi Department of Education.

Denevan, who has two children in the district, first volunteered in 2012 when her oldest child entered Pre-K at Bramlett Elementary School.

Today in Mississippi asked Denevan why she thinks it's important for parents to volunteer at their children's schools and how to go about getting involved.

"Even if it is simply reading to your child's class or going to sit with them during lunch, just show up and be present. I feel like being involved helps parents to form a true connection within the school. Having that connection with your child's teacher lets your child know that you are there, you are involved, and you are invested in their education. If you can't be involved at school, be involved at home. Help them with their homework, read to them, send notes to their teachers — whatever you have to do to show your child that you care."

"For parents entering school for the first time, I encourage you to stop at that dreaded PTO (Parent Teacher Organization) table at open house. I promise you, they aren't there just asking for your money, they truly want to help you get involved. Talk to your child's teacher, even if you aren't involved in the PTO. There are, more than likely, things that you can help with in the classroom. If you can't be there in person, ask your teacher if they need supplies or other classroom items. Let your child go with you to purchase the items and bring them in. Kids love doing this and it is a way for them and the parent to be involved without the parent having to be present at the school."

Teaching is not easy

Morgan has been teaching since July 2010.

Like most first-time teachers, the first couple of years were rough.

Morgan was slated to teach a few classes of 8th and 9th grade history and a section of theater during her first year. Two days before school started, the principal called her and asked if she could teach 11th grade, state-tested U.S. history.

"I am always up for a challenge, so I said yes. It was a challenge. I had classroom management issues and had to study every night just to get through the next day. I found myself crying most days after the students left for the day. I was so scared that I was going to let them down. The U.S. history test in Mississippi is the last state test that stands between students and graduation. I was so scared that I wasn't doing enough to prepare them," Morgan said.

Turns out, that group of students had the highest U.S. history state test scores in Mississippi that year. Morgan said that occurred not because of her skills, but because of the bond she created with her students.

"It's very easy to get caught up in wanting to do everything perfect. That's just not realistic and honestly there is no perfect way," Morgan said.

Morgan said there is something "magical" about teaching history.

"My goal is that students can see the connection between what happened in the past to current developments and policy decisions. Relevance is key in the history classroom — when students are able to make connections in the past to current issues, that is when you see the light bulbs go off. That is when you hook them! I want my students to leave my classroom feeling empowered and ready to participate in their local, state, and national community," Morgan said.

"Our country's fragile system is only as strong as our citizens are knowledgeable to participate in it. If my students leave my classroom a little more interested in what is going on around them, I feel that I've done my job."

Morgan's platform as the state's Teacher of the Year is just that — teaching students the skills "necessary to participate in our complicated and fragile democratic-republic."

Morgan said it's rewarding to watch her students learn, grow, and become successful.

"I am my happiest when a former student drops in to talk to me about college or their career." 🌸

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*"Wow, I didn't realize what
I was missing!" — Tina R., Atlanta*

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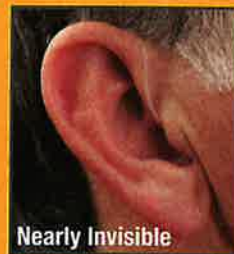
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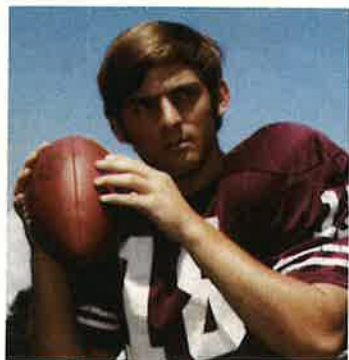
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for the love of the game

Rockey Felker:

Bleeding maroon and white



Former Mississippi State quarterback Rocky Felker bleeds maroon and white. Felker grew up in Brownsville, Tennessee, but every Saturday he would listen with his dad to Bulldog football on the radio with Hall of Fame announcer Jack Cristil.

"Somewhere around the third grade or so, I remember sitting with my dad listening to the MSU game on the radio, and it clicked with me then that he was a big Bulldog fan and that was what I was supposed to like," Felker said. His dad, Edwin 'Babe' Felker who was originally from Corinth, Mississippi, grew up a Bulldog fan.

Felker grew up in football crazy Brownsville where his dad was an assistant football coach. "It really could not have been a better place to grow up and especially, to play high school football. The community was very much involved in supporting the team. Friday nights were special in Brownsville," said Felker.

Haywood, Felker's local high school, had one of the best football teams in the state. The Tomcats were ranked in the Top 10 for 15 consecutive years — 1957 to 1971. Rocky started at quarterback as a sophomore and helped engineer a 29-game winning streak during his final three seasons as the Tomcat signal caller. Rocky, an all-state quarterback and five-sport letterman, was getting interest from Mississippi State, Ole Miss, Alabama, Tennessee, and Vanderbilt. "I visited around, but I think in my heart, I always saw myself playing for MSU."

"Looking back, I think we helped turn the history of Mississippi State football in the right direction," Felker said. The Bulldogs were 4-7 his sophomore year and then recorded a 4-5-2 mark in Coach Bob Tyler's first season. In his 1974 senior season, Rocky led the Bulldogs to a 9-3 record and a Sun Bowl win over North Carolina. *The Nashville Banner* named him their SEC Player of the Year.

"I enjoyed college football. I knew in my heart that being a coach

was what I wanted to do," said Felker. The Cincinnati Bengals drafted him in the 10th round of the 1974 NFL draft, but his coaching aspirations won out.

Felker began his coaching career working on Bob Tyler's staff at Mississippi State. He worked on the MSU staff as an offensive assistant until 1979 when Tyler resigned. Rocky then made assistant coaching stops at Texas Tech, Memphis State, and Alabama. "I really was fortunate to coach under Coach (Ray) Perkins at Alabama. It was a great opportunity for me," said Felker.

After his third year on Perkins' staff, Felker received the call to return home to MSU. So, in 1986 he returned to Starkville as head coach of the Bulldogs, replacing Emory Ballard.

At only 33, he was the youngest head football coach in the nation. "It was a dream come true and something I thought about a lot," said Felker.

Felker led the Bulldogs to a 6-5 season with big wins over Tennessee and Syracuse in his rookie season.

Unfortunately, the program he inherited was in bad shape and the next four seasons were lackluster. He resigned after the 1990 season.

Before returning to Starkville in 2002, Felker and his family made stops in Tulsa, Arkansas, and then back to Tulsa. Mississippi State coach Jackie Sherrill, who had replaced Felker in 1990, brought him back to Starkville as the coordinator of football operations. Felker worked for Sherrill, Sylvester Croom, Dan Mullen, and Joe Moorhead. Today, he is still associated with Bulldog athletics in various roles.

Felker's football achievements led to his induction into three sports halls of fame — the Mississippi State University Sports Hall of Fame, the Mississippi Sports Hall of Fame, and the Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame.

Felker's wife, Susan, died in 2019. His three sons are all involved in the ministry. 🌿

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I enjoyed college football. I knew in my heart that being a coach was what I wanted to do.



by Dale McKee

Dale McKee is a Waynesboro native who has been writing sports in Mississippi since 1973. He is a member of Dixie Electric. Contact him at ddmckee18@yahoo.com.

Meat Free Italian Pasta Casserole

INGREDIENTS

- 3-4 cups of cooked pasta (any style)
- 1 jar of pasta sauce (or use homemade)
- 1 small bag of shredded mozzarella cheese
- 1 tablespoon Italian seasoning
- 1 container of fresh sliced mushrooms
- 1 yellow squash
- 1 zucchini

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Prepare a 9 x 13 baking dish with nonstick spray. Cook pasta according to package directions and drain.

Wash and quarter your squash into even pieces. Add prepared vegetables and mushrooms to the baking dish and season with 1 tablespoon of Italian seasoning and sprinkle with salt (optional).

Add in cooked pasta and pour pasta sauce over the mixture.

Generously cover the top with shredded cheese.

Bake at 350 degrees for 25-30 minutes until bubbly and the vegetables have softened.



Baked Eggplant Parmesan

INGREDIENTS

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| 1 large eggplant sliced into ½" thick rounds | ½ teaspoon salt |
| 3 large eggs | Ground black pepper |
| 1 cup breadcrumbs | 1 24-ounce jar marinara sauce |
| 1 cup shredded Parmesan divided | 2 cups shredded mozzarella |
| 2 teaspoons Italian seasoning | ⅓ cups thinly sliced basil |

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees. Line the baking sheet(s) with parchment paper and cover with nonstick spray.

In a bowl, whisk together breadcrumbs, ½ cup Parmesan, Italian seasoning, and ½ teaspoon salt.

In another bowl, whisk eggs.

Dip eggplant into the egg wash, allow excess to drip off. Then coat with the parmesan mixture over each side of the eggplant slice. Place on the baking sheet. Repeat to coat all eggplant slices.

Spray tops lightly with cooking spray.

Bake until soft inside, and golden and crisp on the outside, about 30 minutes, flipping around the 15-minute mark.

In a baking dish (8x8 or 9x11), add 1 cup of marinara and spread evenly. Add an even layer of baked eggplant slices. Add another 1 cup of sauce and spread evenly over eggplant slices. Add 1 cup mozzarella, ¼ cup of the remaining Parmesan and ¼ cup fresh basil. Top with another layer of baked eggplant slices and spread on the

remaining 1 cup of sauce. Top with the remaining 1 cup of mozzarella cheese, ¼ cup parmesan, and remaining fresh basil. *You can certainly add more cheese if you prefer!

Bake, uncovered, until the top is bubbly and golden, about 15 to 20 minutes.



by Rebecca Turner

Rebecca Turner is an author, registered dietitian, radio host, television presenter and a certified specialist in sports dietetics with the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. A lifelong Mississippian, she lives in Brandon and has spent the last decade offering no-nonsense nutrition guidance that allows you to enjoy good health and good food. Her book, "Mind Over Fork," challenges the way you think, not the way you eat. Find her on social media @RebeccaTurnerNutrition and online at www.RebeccaTurnerNutrition.com.

Sin in the camp

As I walked outside to feed the cats this morning, it felt like I was treading water because the humidity was so high. It was even hard to breathe.

Immediately, what came to mind was something one of my aunts told me one hot summer years ago. She said that grandma told her that the older you get, the more the heat and the cold hurts. She said when grandma told her that, she couldn't imagine what she was talking about. But now she knew. Well, several years later, I know, too.

It's not like it was when we were kids and would ride our bikes downtown on a hot afternoon to see if the time and temperature sign on the bank had hit 100 degrees yet. Nowadays, I don't particularly want to ride in a car when it's that hot, much less on a bike. But when you're a kid, little things like heat bubbles don't phase you.

We've started out this summer with the weather set all the way up to broil. That reminded me of a family story that I have told before, but not lately. However, this seems the summer to repeat it.

After dad retired, he and mom moved into the little house right across the road from the house where mom grew up. Mom's oldest sister, Captola (Aunt Cap) and Uncle Red lived in the old home place. Another sister, Aunt Ermie, and Uncle Lloyd lived down the road. In an area in-between the three houses, every summer the three couples — mom and dad, Aunt Cap and Uncle Red, and Aunt Ermie and Uncle Lloyd — would grow the finest garden in Itawamba County. Then a heat wave and drought arrived.

Now, that kind of weather isn't uncommon in Mississippi. But it usually breaks after a few days or a week. But this heat spell just stayed. Pretty soon, Aunt Cap reached back into her Baptist roots and diagnosed the problem as being, "sin in the camp." Now, the whole Southeast was in the same shape, but the root was someone living on that hilltop was not right with God. And it wasn't going to get any better until they straightened out. (Maybe that's why they used to have revivals in summer. To break heat waves!)



Anyway, they drug hoses out, watered, and wore hats and wrapped wet towels around their necks as they worked. And if the sun wasn't blistering enough, Aunt Cap blistered them with "sin in the camp, sin in the camp."

Until one weekend Aunt Cap and Uncle Red went out of town to Birmingham. And while they were gone, it rained 3 inches on that garden. There was never another mention of "sin in the camp" again, except from Uncle Lloyd. Every time the garden started getting dry, from then on, he'd suggest to Aunt Cap that maybe she needed to go to Birmingham again. 



by Walt Grayson

Walt Grayson is the host of "Mississippi Roads" on Mississippi Public Broadcasting television and the author of two "Looking Around Mississippi" books and "Oh! That Reminds Me: More Mississippi Homegrown Stories." Walt is also a reporter and 4 p.m. news anchor at WJTV in Jackson. He lives in Brandon and is a Central Electric member. Contact him at walt@waltgrayson.com.